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REPORT ON TRIP TO VIETNAM

Laurence E. Lynn, Jr. and Robert L. Sansom

January 18-30, 1970

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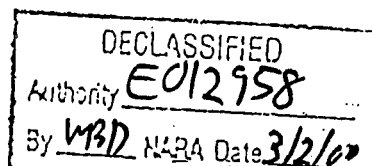
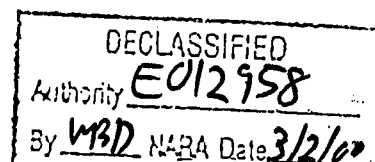
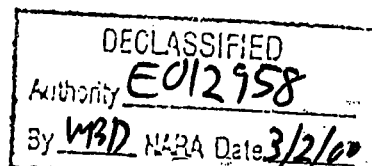


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I. INTRODUCTION

Itinerary. From January 18 to January 30, we visited South Vietnam. Our purpose was to make a first hand evaluation of the situation in the countryside and of the extent and durability of recent improvements in GVN control over the rural population of South Vietnam.

We spent January 19 and January 29 in Saigon having informal discussions with U.S. officials. The remainder of the time we spent in the field as follows:

IV Corps

- Jan. 20-21: Dinh Tuong Province;
- Jan. 22: Vinh Binh Province, Chau Doc Province;

III Corps

- Jan. 23: Binh Long Province;
- Jan. 24: Binh Duong Province;
- Jan. 25: Hau Nghia Province;

II Corps

- Jan. 26: Pleiku Province;
- Jan. 27: Binh Dinh Province;

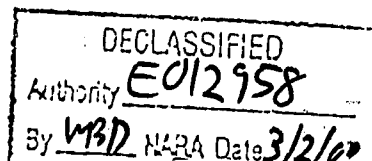
I Corps

- Jan. 28: Quang Tin Province.

We chose these Provinces because we believed they represented a cross section of those areas of countryside in which the overall success or failure of U.S. and GVN policies and programs will be determined and in which the issue is still in doubt.

The bulk of the time was spent in informal briefings and discussions with U.S. Province and District Senior Advisors and their Vietnamese counterparts and staffs, U.S. Mobile Advisory Teams, U.S. District Intelligence Operations Coordination Center (DIOCC) advisors, U.S. and Vietnamese small unit leaders, Vietnamese village and hamlet

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officials, and private Vietnamese citizens, mainly farmers. We visited 20-25 Districts in the nine provinces, and perhaps twice as many villages, RF/PF outposts, DIOCCs, etc.

The Concept of GVN Control. The frame of reference for our evaluation of GVN control is described in the paper "The Situation in the Countryside," Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG), January 10, 1970.

To review briefly this framework, control can be defined as that level of combined political and military strength that, when possessed by one side, excludes effective strength by the other side.

The GVN controls a hamlet when two conditions exists:

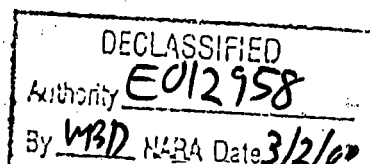
- the hamlet is protected by security forces evaluated as "adequate" by the U.S. District Senior Advisor, and
- a fully functioning GVN administration is resident in the hamlet 24 hours a day.

Between September 1968 and the end of the 1969, GVN control has increased from 20% to about 55% of the rural population based on statistics reported from Vietnam. During the same period, Viet Cong control has fallen from 35% to 7%. About 40% of the population is under the control of neither side.

Outline of the Report. In evaluating the situation in the countryside, we sought evidence concerning the basic issues raised by the VSSG paper:

- Section II: The current extent of GVN control and the significance of the gains achieved by the GVN during the last 18-24 months.
- Section III: The reasons for the control gains achieved, in particular:
 - expansion of the GVN control apparatus,
 - a decline in enemy military capability, and
 - decreased popular support for the enemy.
- Section IV: The prospects for the future.

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II. GAINS IN GVN CONTROL

According to the Hamlet Evaluation System over 90% of the rural population is "within GVN security," i.e. has a composite 9-indicator security score of A, B or C. The VSSG indicator shows only 55% of the rural population is under GVN control. The difference is in large part due to the status of the population in the C hamlet category. The VSSG indicator classifies most of the C hamlet population as "under the influence of both sides."

We sought evidence as to which general magnitude better approximates the actual situation by asking several questions:

-- What activities take place in a C hamlet as contrasted with a GVN-controlled or A/B hamlet?

-- How accurate are U.S. assessments of the two specific indicators--adequate defenses and effective GVN administration -- used in the VSSG control indicator?

-- To what extent does the rating system and pressures for improved performance affect the validity of the indicators?

-- To what extent do local accommodations between the VC and GVN affect the validity of the indicators?

We concluded that:

-- about half of the rural population is now under effective GVN control, at least twice what it was 18 months ago. Not quite half of the rural population is under the control of neither side.

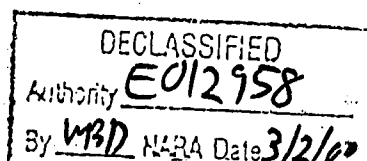
-- However, the rate of improvement has definitely slowed in the last few months because the enemy's effort and capabilities to counter pacification are increasing.

Status of Control

The C Hamlet

We visited a number of hamlets of each classification from A through D, and discussed security and GVN activities with the village chief, his security deputy and, where possible, with private citizens.

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Conditions in the C Hamlets varied widely. However, they were unquestionably vulnerable to some types of VC influence, and, we believe, as a general rule, the C hamlet population cannot be classified as under the control of either side.

Three examples give an idea of the differences between B, C and D hamlets:

B Hamlet: Truong Binh Hiep Village, Chou Thanh District, Binh Duong Province. This village was brought under GVN security in 1968, and it comprises B hamlets. The VC had controlled the village from 1959-1965, and had regular access to it through 1968. Each hamlet now has a PF platoon, and the village has 201 armed PSDF.

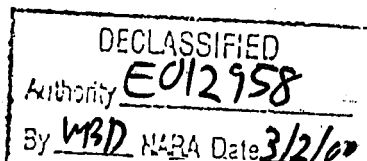
The village chief reported that only one or two VCI now exist, that they are well known to the villagers, and that they do not come around regularly. The VC entered the village only once in 1969, and lost one killed and one weapon captured. Five or six families still have relatives in the VC, but these families are actively trying to contact their relatives and persuade them to leave the VC, return and live in the village. Village officials believed it probably would be physically impossible for these families actively to support their VC relatives clandestinely.

C Hamlet: Long Trung Village, Cai Lay District, Dinh Tuong Province. This village was brought under GVN security during 1969, and it contained weak C hamlets. It had 5 PF platoons, but the PSDF had not yet been armed.

The village chief reported that the village had 6 identified VCI. He said they lived 2000 meters away in an outlying area. A VC guerrilla squad was reported to live in a non-pacified area to the west. The VC would come in only at night and only if a "strong armed force" were available to support them. The village chief said he had no current intelligence on the activities of these VC and that he did not personally know the VCI, who were from outlying parts of the village.

The village chief reported that the VC "still collect taxes heavily," though nothing like in the past, and had recruited VCI replacements from the village's "outlying areas". The VC had last entered the village during the Allied New Year ceasefire. Two months before our visit, a PF outpost had been attacked, and the VC had lost two weapons to the GVN in the attack.

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D Hamlet: Cat Hanh Village, Phu Cat District, Binh Dinh Province. This village was controlled by the VC for four years, was formerly a VC stronghold (the home of 60% of the Provincial VC leaders), and was brought under GVN security two months before our visit. It comprised two C and seven D hamlets. The village security deputy is an RF Group Commander, and the main security in the village is an RF compound at its center. Four of the nine hamlet chiefs sleep in the RF compound, the others in their hamlets.

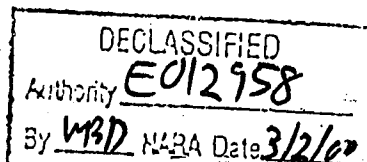
The village had last sustained a heavy VC attack about four days before our visit. The VC had collected 10-20 bags of rice during the previous two months compared to 20 bags a night before that. The VCI are still living in the village, but they are being tolerated by the GVN officials until they are either won over, are eliminated by the VC themselves, or are arrested. A VC squad could enter the village with virtual impunity because the officials "want to teach the people, not shoot them," and the VC are still "the people." The VC have a squad and a platoon of guerrillas, plus a district company, living nearby. The guerrillas provide security for the rice collection activities. A total of 427 residents of the village (out of 8400) are currently in the VC.

About 20% of the people now believe in GVN security, 30% support the VC, and 50% waver. Some villagers pledge rice to the VC in exchange for immunity for their newly built homes. If the VC could destroy one or two hamlets, according to officials, the GVN would lose all support. If the GVN can hold out "through TET," over half of the waverers will be won over, and 50% will support the GVN.

In summary,

- the B village
 - experienced only isolated VC incidents,
 - had a fully functioning GVN security apparatus, with PF carrying the primary defense burden,
 - had reduced the VCI and other VC units in the immediate area to relative impotence,
 - exhibited positive support for the GVN;

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-- the C village

-- experienced occasional serious VC incursions and non-military activities at night, and offered the VC a limited recruiting potential,

-- had VCI and some VC security forces in the general area,

-- had a partially ineffective or incomplete security apparatus,

-- had officials who displayed some caution with respect to assessing the strength and displaying their knowledge of the local VC;

-- the D village

-- was not secure from attack and harassment,

-- had VCI present in the village in the daytime and only limited GVN presence at night,

-- had an extremely limited local security force,

-- continued to provide resources and support to the VC,

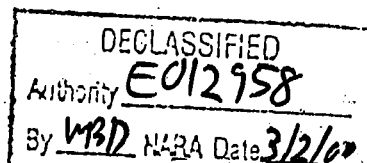
-- had extensive family ties to the VC.

Quality of U.S. Reporting

The overriding importance of a 24-hour GVN presence to GVN control was quite generally acknowledged. However, it was readily apparent that our knowledge of the effectiveness of the local GVN administration and of its physical presence in the village at night was imperfect.

For example, many reports of where officials sleep at night were vague or extremely general and obviously second-hand opinions obtained from Vietnamese counterparts. Also, and more important, a report that a hamlet chief regularly slept in his own hamlet could mean:

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- he slept in the PF compound always or frequently;
- he slept in a village office secured by PSDF;
- he slept in a different private home every night;
- he slept in his own home every night.

However, these situations are definitely not the same as far as their implications for GVN control are concerned.

Reporting on the adequacy of hamlet defenses is apparently much more accurate. The existence of PF and PSDF, their performance in recent contacts, the state of their training, and their capabilities against the local threat are easier for an American to assess, and the numerous assessments we received seemed objective and factually supportable.

Extent of Inflated Ratings

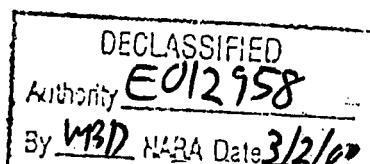
We encountered four separate indications at various levels that some overrating in response to pressures to meet pacification goals takes place. One district official in a key province displayed some pride that he hadn't met his quotas last year, i.e. that he hadn't inflated his ratings merely to get a good report card.

Among the more interesting observations we encountered, however, was a comment from a Deputy District Senior Advisor when entering a C hamlet in another district: "I never trust another man's C hamlet." This remark reflects both the vagueness of the C hamlet criteria, which can encompass wide variations in actual conditions, and the 1969 pressures to achieve pacification goals that were defined in terms of the population under C hamlet or better security.

On the other hand, we encountered many instances in which the district advisor quite readily reported downgrading some of his hamlets because security had deteriorated.

We concluded that reporting is probably inflated, but not enough to cast doubt on the basic validity of the indicators or their direction of movement over time.

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Accommodations

A frequently cited failure of attempts to measure or otherwise assess conditions in the countryside is their inability to determine the extent of accommodation between the GVN and the VC or their nominal supporters. By accommodation we mean tacit or overt relationships of many kinds that reflect a mutual recognition and acceptance of each side's presence or influence in an area.

We asked about evidence of accommodation in most of the Provinces and districts we visited. Unless captured documents, Hoi Chanh or POWs reveal it, or unless there is an effective DIOCC, it is difficult for Americans to acquire information on this, one of the subtler aspects of the situation in the countryside. For this reason, it is impossible to form any summary judgments about the current extent of accommodation. Nevertheless, most advisors were sensitive to the problem and alert to signs of it, and we obtained some useful information.

The most frequently cited evidences of accommodation were:

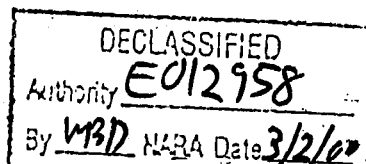
-- tacit avoidance of contact by military units.

For example, the ARVN 7th Division operating in Sam Giang district would apparently sweep through an area where a VC radio transmitter and Headquarters were known to be located and not make contact. The unit was evidently avoiding the tree line where the VC unit was located.

The district senior advisor of Trang Bang district in Hau Nghia reported that two PF platoons in areas with heavy VC presence never made any contacts, though Americans always did when they went into the area. He suspected accommodation.

On the other hand, one of the more perceptive advisors we met, who had several years of experience in Vietnam, and spoke fluent Vietnamese, said that often the Vietnamese did not view these instances as accommodation. An ARVN unit may not move into a specified area because the commander recognizes that the requirements of operating in the area exceed the capabilities of his unit, though more capable American units may have no trouble.

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-- tolerance by village and hamlet officials of limited contacts between the VCI and local residents or of other low-level VC non-military activities.

Contacts which do not produce insecurity, and which may or may not involve GVN officials, and which even if known, may be beyond their capability to prevent. Usually these contacts are not known to U.S. officials, either because U.S. sources are limited, the nature of the contact is vague, or because GVN district officials may withhold such information to avoid the adverse effect on their HES scores or poor reflections on their effectiveness. This situation is particularly likely to prevail in C and D hamlets.

For example, a detailed study of two hamlets in Khanh Hoa revealed that the PF and PSDF will tolerate VC house to house movements and limited political activity as long as there are no contacts.

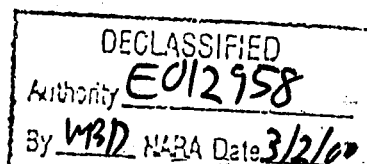
-- failure to arrest known VCI with strong past or potential future ties with local officials.

Several American DIOCC advisors reported that district and village officials were reluctant to arrest VCI, the reason being that some day the official might have to work with the VCI in a coalition government.

In general, the absence of contacts and reports of overt VC activities in areas with known VCI and local security forces strongly suggests accommodations of some sort, if only of a highly covert sort involving a few families.

In areas where the GVN has the physical capability to defeat or eliminate the VC influence but accommodates to it, the VC are clearly handed an important advantage. We concluded that the prevalence of such accommodations depends on the degree of security, on local political conditions, and on the prospects for a ceasefire, a coalition government or other form of national accommodation. We estimate that local accommodations, both political and military, would increase markedly if a national accommodation seemed to be in prospect, especially in the more politically sophisticated districts.

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Extent of Improvements

There was no question but that the situation we saw represented a sharp improvement as compared to 12-18 months ago. A rough estimate that the GVN has doubled its control seems accurate. We were taken to or through numerous areas which had been completely inaccessible to visitors like ourselves months before. The numbers of new outposts, resettled areas, new construction and extensive road traffic were quite evident.

We gained the impression, however, that improvements in the control situation slowed down in October - January and, in some districts, security was deteriorating. For example,

Sam Giang District, Dinh Tuong. The VC have begun to be active in the daytime now. When U.S. 9th Division units were in the area, the VC were forced to operate in squad and platoon-sized units; now they can operate in multiple companies. The VCI that were eliminated in September-November have all been replaced. The segment of Route 4 running through the district is continuously and heavily mined by a contingent of 22 sappers.

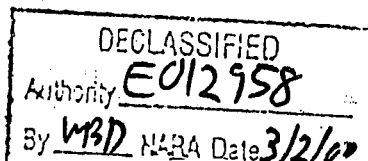
There are 256 guerrillas in the district, and 360 identified VCI. The VC local force unit may be half NVA, and the two main force battalions are 50-70% NVA.

The GVN is experiencing recruiting problems, and all seven RF companies are below strength.

Trang Bang District, Hau Nghia. This district, a historic VC area, has a main force regiment, two VC battalions and an NVA battalion operating in or near it. NVA are also being used to fill guerrilla units. The VC/NVA are opposed by elements of three U.S. battalions and three Vietnamese battalion-sized units.

The District Senior Advisor reported that he experienced some reversions from C to D hamlets in January because of increased enemy activity. He indicated that recent high security reflected reduced VC activity, not increased GVN activity.

(He also reported that district officials frequently withhold unfavorable information from Americans lest it adversely influence their HES ratings. He reported that at one meeting, a hamlet chief openly complained that "we are a B hamlet only on the arbitrary American rating system.")

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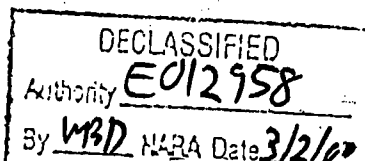
Binh Khe District, Binh Dinh. This district has had outstanding pacification success; 1970 goals are already achieved. However, since January 4, 1970 the District has been hit heavily, so security began deteriorating.

The VC/NVA units have increased their attacks on the pacification program. Because the PF and PSDF in certain areas such as Binh An village had gotten lax, they were hit hard and were shaken. Three days before our visit, one PF platoon was hit hard when all but three soldiers were having dinner by a local force battalion that had recently become active again; many weapons were lost. In an attack on the PSDF, the VC, who had been mistaken for friendly troops, captured nine weapons. In another attack on PSDF, the VC captured three weapons. An RF compound in Binh Thanh Valley was deeply penetrated by a NVA unit. There have been several propaganda incidents, including one in which the VC gathered 30 peasants for a lengthy lecture.

The District Senior Advisor indicated that the territorial security forces in the District are not trained well enough to handle a coordinated, large unit NVA attack.

The District Chief reinforced the District Senior Advisor's complaint that Vietnamese supply channels have been working badly:

- the RF/PF have a small supply organization;
- the RF/PF maneuver units must go to the supply unit for supplies rather than being supplied in their areas of operation;
- the PF lack vehicles to carry supplies -- the District Chief has one vehicle to supply 1500 PF.

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III. CAUSES OF INCREASED GVN CONTROL

Summary Findings

In assessing the causes of the GVN control gains over the last 18-24 months, we found that they can be attributed to:

- (1) a decline in the enemy threat.

The 1968 enemy offensives and the successful U.S. operations throughout 1968 and 1969 produced casualties and defections which resulted in a significant decline in enemy capabilities. Because the enemy had upgraded his guerrilla and local forces into his main forces for the 1968 offensives, he sacrificed the capability to defend his own areas against expanding GVN local forces.

The weakness in VC local and guerrilla forces in turn caused the VCI, when confronted with newly deployed GVN territorial security forces, to withdraw into isolated areas or to move to other populated areas where they would not risk detection.

However, though dislocated, the enemy's infrastructure remained in tact. Moreover, the enemy is now attempting to rebuild his local forces and guerrillas:

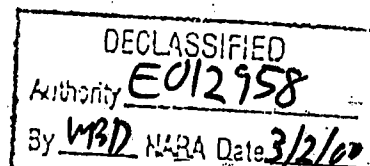
- VC and NVA main force regiments and battalions have been broken down into smaller elements and are functioning as local forces or guerrillas;

- NVA fillers are being used to strengthen existing local force and guerrilla units.

The enemy's purpose appears to be to rebuild his own control forces and use them to challenge the GVN's control forces. Meanwhile, the still-intact VCI, the most potent political force in the countryside, gives the enemy the capability to pursue a political strategy if he wants to risk exposing them under the conditions of a ceasefire.

- (2) extension of the GVN control apparatus as a result of the deployment of large numbers of newly formed territorial security units and the establishment of new district, village and hamlet governments.

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Territorial security gains in 1968-1969 were achieved by:

-- increases of 50% to 75% in the last two years in the number of territorial security forces,

-- improved leadership and performance of RF-PF units fostered by the skills and leadership training imparted by U.S. advisors, as a result of combined operations with U.S. units, and from confidence gained from successful maintenance of security even in the face of a declining enemy threat,

-- better logistics support provided primarily by U.S. sources of supply,

-- better equipment, particularly the M-16, and

-- better combat support provided with few exceptions by U.S. forces.

RF and PF performance varies from totally ineffective in areas where they cannot cope with enemy units of similar size and the guerrillas and VCI move freely at night, to first-rate in areas where they can defend against enemy local and main force companies and deny enemy guerrillas and VCI significant access to GVN territory.

The PSDF have not established themselves as a credible fighting force.

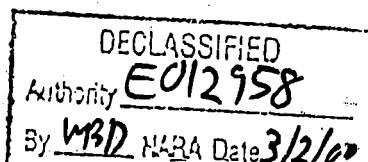
A second important factor in the extension of the GVN control apparatus was the application of a successful concept of pacification. Despite the failures of earlier concepts such as the strategic hamlet, this one was successful because:

-- it was first applied in late 1968 against a weakened enemy,

-- it relies on locally recruited, nationally paid Popular Forces as the key territorial security force,

-- U.S. advisors now fully appreciate the interactions between the control and main force wars and acknowledge the substantive benefits the GVN obtains from pacification gains when the enemy is forced to fight as a conventional army. GVN officials have also backed pacification although they may be less sensitive to the real limitations on the concepts used and inclined to abuse them under the pressures of U.S. withdrawals,

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-- the HES system has served as a valuable management tool and is the operational language of pacification, spoken by Americans and Vietnamese alike,

-- U.S. advisors have been successful in getting a significant number of ineffective GVN officials removed.

Extension of the GVN control apparatus has also entailed the establishment of government organizations and implementation of special government programs, but, unlike the programs for territorial security, they have not showed much success. We found that:

-- although little is known about the effectiveness of the Village Self Development program, some believe that it distributes funds to the more well-to-do farmers and sponsors projects of dubious economic value,

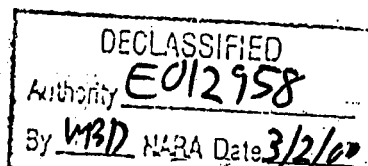
-- the Vietnam Information Service is ineffective, being too mechanical and unconcerned with substance, and presently incapable of countering the enemy's propaganda effort should there be a cease-fire or political settlement,

-- little is known about the quality of village and hamlet officials, and police, but there is enough evidence of poor attitudes and performance to warrant a thorough study, including a detailed analysis of the 1970 village and hamlet elections.

The contribution of the Phoenix program to the extension of the GVN control apparatus was slight. In general the Phoenix program is ineffective. District Intelligence Operations Coordination Centers are to identify and maintain dossiers on VCI. They are also to plan and carry out operations to neutralize the VCI. We found:

-- there is little high level support for DIOCC activities and great interagency jealousies, particularly between the police and the army,

-- much DIOCC work is too sloppy to serve as a basis for police or court actions,

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-- there is some public fear and little public support for Phoenix and we heard allegations of abuse which we did not investigate,

-- there is some evidence that accommodations precluded effective DIOCC operations,

-- most VCI neutralizations are not attributable to DIOCC operations but result from the Chieu Hoi program or the operations of U.S. forces.

On the other hand, the Phoenix program may serve as a deterrent to VCI activities, forcing the VCI to leave populated areas and perhaps it is too early to judge the concept's full potential.

--(3) a decline in popular support for the enemy.

The enemy lost substantial popular support during 1968 as a result of the insecurity and manpower and tax burdens his policies placed on the population.

However, GVN performance has not increased its popular support; the population is more apathetic.

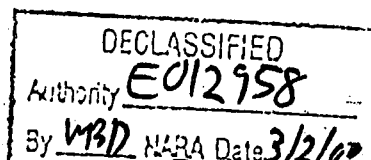
The GVN officials, police, and soldiers still have a poor attitude toward the people, whereas the VC, in spite of their heavy handed policies of the recent past, are still considered to be more responsive to popular needs.

The VC have popular land reform and rent reduction programs, whereas the GVN has no land reform program and rents in GVN areas commonly exceed the 25% legal limit.

Economic prosperity is the chief GVN attraction for the population.

Corruption remains a serious and unresolved GVN problem.

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The Enemy Threat

GVN control increased from 20% to 54% of the rural population between early 1967 and the end of 1969. These control gains occurred in the face of enemy opposition although a decline in enemy strength over the period was a contributing factor. The opportunity for further expansion of GVN control will in part be determined by the threat posed by the enemy's main and local forces, his guerrillas, and his infrastructure (the VCI).

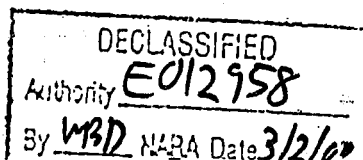
An important aspect of the threat is how the enemy's forces are employed -- with what tactics, against what targets, etc. -- factors that are determined by the enemy's strategy.

Viet Cong Infrastructure

The Viet Cong infrastructure is the political arm of the enemy's effort. Members of the infrastructure recruit, tax, proselytize, and mobilize the peasants to support the enemy. The infrastructure also provides critical assistance to the enemy's military forces, aiding them with intelligence, logistics and combat support. For example, members of the infrastructure gather intelligence on potential targets and guide the enemy's forces in their attacks.

There are an estimated 75,000 VCI in South Vietnam of which 40,000 are positively identified by the Phoenix program.

We found that despite the enemy's losses over the last two years, his infrastructure is largely intact. This was the case in over 90% of the more than 20 districts we visited. From observation and other evidence we conclude that only in Saigon and the districts bordering Saigon and Gia Dinh such as Lai Thieu District in Binh Duong as well as in the northernmost provinces of Thua Thien (Hue) and Quang Tri was there evidence that significant portions of the VC infrastructure have been eliminated. The effectiveness of anti-VCI activities in the Saigon area is attested to by the fact that the densely populated III Corps has only 10% of South Vietnam's VCI yet in 1969 accounted for the greatest proportion of neutralizations (40%).

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In most areas of the country, however, the enemy's infrastructure continues to survive despite the GVN's recent control gains and despite the Phoenix and Chieu Hoi programs which are intended to neutralize the VCI. The VCI have avoided expanding GVN control by moving into the mangrove swamps, nearby tree lines, sanctuaries in Cambodia, and in many cases to populated areas across district and province lines where Phoenix detection is made impossible by the lack of administrative coordination and the sheer burden of the job of tracking down aliases, false identification cards, etc.

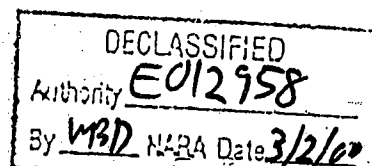
Although the VCI are not continuously resident in many hamlets, they had relatively easy night-time access to one-half to two-thirds of the rural population in the districts we visited. We were consistently told that the VCI have night-time access to HES-rated "C" hamlets and in some cases "B" hamlets. For example, in December, 1969 in the most secure of Dinh Tuong province's seven districts a VCI tax collector entered the "B" rated District capital to collect \$40 million piasters (approximately \$350,000 dollars), in taxes from the town's prominent citizens.

Despite their relatively intact status, the effectiveness of the VCI has been impeded by two developments. First, although neutralizations are usually replaced by upgrading lower-level cadre, recruiting new cadre, or converting guerrillas, the calibre of cadre has definitely declined. We found some cases of teenage VCI, whereas in 1967 this probably was not the case. We were frequently told that the level of training of the VCI replacements was low, and this undoubtedly has reduced their effectiveness.

The second factor reducing VCI effectiveness is the declining strength of their protectors -- the guerrillas. One or two guerrillas usually accompany a VCI and a guerrilla force is a prerequisite for any freedom of VCI movement in a hamlet. We note below that in many cases the strength of guerrilla units declined by as much as one-third in 1969, although NVA fillers as well as local force VC are now being downgraded to the guerrilla role.

In sum, the foundation of the VC control apparatus, the VCI, continues to exist throughout most of South Vietnam. It remains, therefore a serious threat although VCI losses around Saigon and Hue

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seriously inhibit the enemy's ability to strike these key GVN areas. Accordingly, GVN survivability has improved. However, the VCI is still the most potent political force in the countryside.

A largely intact VCI suggests that its political role in the event of a ceasefire would be more potent than in the current military situation where their activities are limited by their ability to obtain protection from guerrilla units and avoid night ambushes by the RF and PF. A ceasefire would permit them to move freely in GVN areas in daytime to conduct political activities.

Guerrillas

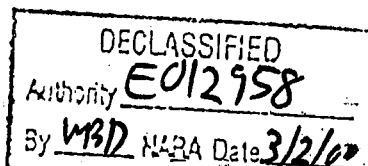
The guerrilla is the village and hamlet level military arm of the VC. His functions are to protect the VCI, to harrass and terrorize nearby GVN forces and officials, and to provide logistics and combat support for VC main and local force units.

The guerrilla is the weakest element in the enemy's force structure. He is the least committed and most poorly trained of all the enemy's forces. In many cases the peasant becomes a VC guerrilla because the VC control his hamlet. As a guerrilla he can serve at home and meet VC demands with minimum sacrifice and risk.

When things go bad for the VC, the guerrilla is the first to bail out. Thus, when GVN control expands, the guerrilla, preferring to live at home, rallies to the GVN. In October and November 1969 85% of the Chieu Hoi ralliers were VC guerrillas. (Few main and local force VC or VCI rally.)

In the districts we visited, guerrilla strengths had declined by one-fourth to one-third in 1969. While this is an important loss to the enemy it does not cripple his effort. However, if he does not reverse the situation he may find himself in the position the GVN occupied in 1965 when it controlled a very small proportion of the rural population (about 20%) and was unable to recruit territorial forces (RF and PF) except by rounding up villagers on military sweep operations. In all of the provinces we visited except Vinh Binh in the Delta, the enemy was facing severe recruiting problems because of recent expansions in GVN control. In Vinh Binh where GVN control has expanded relatively little, the VC are still able to recruit, their guerrilla strength has not declined, and no NVA fillers have been observed.

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Thus to replace his lost guerrillas, the enemy must rely on external sources of manpower. This he is doing. He is manning his guerrilla forces by breaking down VC local force companies and main force battalions. We were told in Hau Nghia, Binh Duong, Binh Dinh and Quang Tin that infiltrated NVA were manning guerrilla units.

Therefore the enemy is making a concerted effort to rebuild his lowest level military force whose function is to challenge the GVN's territorial security forces and control the population as well as to protect and assist VC/NVA main force units.

VC Local and Main Forces

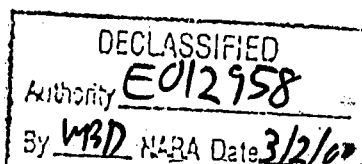
We did not investigate the enemy's main forces except as an adjunct to the control war.

When the enemy is in either a defensive or a protracted war posture, the primary role of his main forces is to provide support for his control apparatus. Local force companies attack GVN outposts to force the GVN to withdraw, thereby permitting VCI and guerrillas to move freely among the population. Enemy main forces deter and meet ARVN and allied force incursions into VC areas. They protect vital VC base camp areas and LOC's. They may also attack GVN cities and bases in order to ease the pressure on VC areas or to inflict casualties for political reasons, e.g. to embarrass the GVN.

The only time the enemy has used his main forces in a sustained offensive was during the three 1968 General Offensives when he sought to occupy and hold key GVN cities and towns.

Presently it appears that the enemy is employing his local and main forces cautiously and in support of his control apparatus. In general, enemy main forces have avoided contact with ARVN and U.S. forces except at Ben Het and Bu Prang/Duc Lap in the summer of 1969, where ARVN was challenged near the enemy's Cambodian sanctuary. These battles were probably designed to force U.S. and ARVN units to foresake their pacification roles and fight the NVA under disadvantageous conditions. Alternatively the attacks could have been launched for their

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political value with regard to U.S. troop withdrawals or Vietnamization. In either case the targets themselves, population centers of 2,000 and 7,000 respectively, were not the strategic objective.

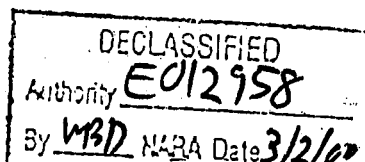
The protracted war nature of current enemy main force operations is also seen in the deployment of his main force assets. We encountered frequent examples of VC and NVA main force regiments and battalions that have been broken down into companies to perform the local force role. In Binh Dinh the 10th NVA regiment, which entered South Vietnam in April 1969, was broken down into local force companies operating under the control of the province party apparatus. VC and NVA battalions were in some cases broken down into small squad and platoon size units and are functioning as guerrillas. The II Corps U.S. Field Force staff's assessment of this development was that it took place not because of main force weaknesses but because of a directive to reinforce at the guerrilla level.

In addition to this downgrading of the enemy's force structure, NVA fillers are being placed in guerrilla and local force units in all four Corps areas. Of the nine provinces visited, only in Vinh Binh, where VC forces are still relatively strong and the VC recruitment base has been largely unaffected by small GVN control gains, was there no evidence of NVA infiltration into what have heretofore been VC manned units. In Binh Dinh where NVA appeared in local force companies for the first time about six months ago, attacks on pacification have risen and the enemy is stronger than he was six months ago.

Although we did not undertake a systematic examination of the enemy's main forces, the evidence we obtained indicated that while his main forces have been weakened by downgrading and transfers to other units as well as casualties, they still pose a significant threat. Only in III Corps were they judged "weak." However they are, as already noted, avoiding contact and their attacks are primarily attacks by fire rather than ground assaults. Particularly notable is that the five NVA regiments infiltrated into the Delta have not initiated significant offensive contact.

The enemy's increased use of sapper units and tactics is a main force economy of force tactic. But it may also be viewed a means of using main and local forces in a guerrilla role because sapper tactics serve both to inflict casualties on U.S. and ARVN units -- a main force function -- and to harass and terrorize GVN territorial security forces -- a control force function.

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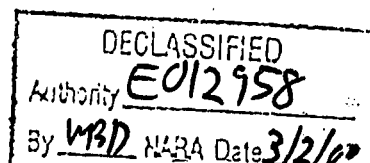
These developments suggest that the enemy has undertaken to rebuild his force structure from the bottom up by breaking down larger units and using NVA fillers where necessary, even as guerrillas. He is thus giving primary emphasis to the control war, diverting assets from the main force war.

Reliance of NVA forces raises the question of whether they can function as effectively as VC in the guerrilla and local force roles, and as main forces in the Delta.

An important factor in the success of the NVA in these roles is their training and health. Our inquiries from the Delta to I Corps found that the NVA soldiers killed and captured were in good health, well fed, and in most cases between 20 and 30 years old. They were well equipped. Several U.S. commanders noted, however, that the NVA were less skilled tactically than in the past, although they seemed to be reasonably well led and motivated and are at least a match for ARVN.

Another issue is whether the VC and NVA will be able to work together. We found evidence of disagreements between VC and NVA forces. For example, the VC consider that the NVA over play the military aspects of the war and underplay political considerations and that they are too insensitive to damage to the rural population in VC areas. However, in the key provinces of Hau Nghia and Binh Dinh, and in general in the other seven provinces we visited, we found that while there are some VC/NVA frictions, the VC and NVA work together relatively well. As one District Senior Advisor put it, "they get along better than the ARVN and Regional Forces."

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Extension of the GVN Control Apparatus

In August 1968, the GVN launched its Accelerated Pacification Campaign. This Campaign and follow-up efforts throughout 1969 resulted in the recruitment, training, and deployment of GVN territorial security forces -- Popular Force (PF) platoons and Regional Force (RF) companies -- and People's Self Defense Forces (PSDF) and the establishment of new government administrative units in hamlets and villages where formerly the GVN had no permanent presence.

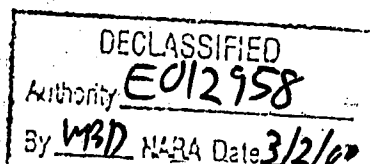
Equally important, these developments reflected the acceptance and implementation of an operational concept of pacification by high level GVN officials, province and district chiefs on an unprecedented scale.

Territorial Security Forces and PSDFDescription

Popular Forces are lightly armed platoon sized para-military units composed of paid, full time personnel. Their primary mission is providing local defense for the hamlets in which they live, but though only lightly armed, they are also used on offensive operations. Normally they are under the operational control of the district or village chief.

Regional Forces are company-sized units composed of paid full-time personnel. They usually operate within their own district under the operational command of the district chief. They often guard bridges or perform other static defense functions, but they are expected to serve as a reaction force to support PF units under attack as well as to conduct offensive operations within their districts. In some areas several RF companies are combined into company groups, under an RF group commander, and employed as main forces.

The People's Self Defense Force (PSDF) is an unpaid, part-time hamlet militia unit, the core of which is a unit of about 35 men armed with shotguns, carbines, or other old model weapons. For each armed

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man, roughly two more hamlet residents -- often girls or women -- are assigned unarmed supporting roles.

Membership in the PSDF is not voluntary. Members of the armed units are men either too old or too young to be drafted to serve in regular or territorial forces but nevertheless required by law to serve the Government in some capacity.

Role in Providing Security

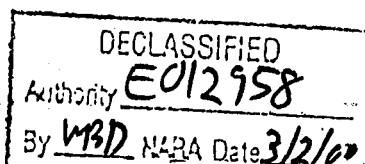
Though their performance has been mixed, the contribution of PSDF, PF and RF units to the gains in GVN security has been significant.

Where GVN territorial forces are good, the enemy is all but denied the springboard effect he obtains from the logistics, intelligence, and manpower support provided by the population. Thus, in areas such as Lai Thieu District of Binh Duong and in Thua Thien, where GVN territorial forces are effective, the enemy is forced to fight as a conventional army, with a logistics tail. Moreover, when he breaks down into small units, GVN territorial forces are then capable of defeating him. When he masses, he risks costly losses dealt by ARVN and U.S. units with air support.

The mere presence of GVN territorial forces, even if they are of marginal effectiveness, denies the VCI and their security elements continuous access to the population. VCI effectiveness is further diminished when RF and PF units set up night ambushes, as they are required to do. In general, VC units can no longer move through an area in large units but must filter through a few at a time. The VCI must enter hamlets with more caution and stay a shorter time, and they are no longer able to hold large meetings but can contact only a few people at a time.

In areas with ineffective territorial forces, however, the enemy is still free to recruit, tax, and prepare for combat. A good example is in Cau Ngang district in Vinh Binh. Recently a PSDF outpost was overrun and 25 weapons lost, probably an inside job. The hamlet chief and security deputy were wounded and the hamlet deputy for administration was killed. A RF company 800 meters away didn't react until three hours later. The PF have reestablished the outpost, but the hamlet is demoralized, barely hanging on.

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Performance

The striking aspect of territorial force performance was its variation. Whereas in one area a GVN unit of platoon size conducts nighttime offensive operations against VC or NVA units of the same size in other areas a unit of similar characteristics remains cloistered in its outpost at night, and is vulnerable to attack by an enemy unit of similar size. This variation was most appropriately described by General Abrams, who judged that "One-half is doing a great job, but the other half isn't doing a goddamn thing." (See memoranda of conversation at Tab B.)

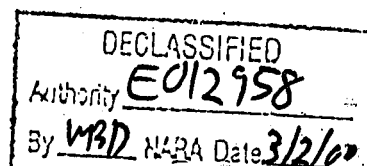
In most cases PF can be relied on to defend their outposts against small scale enemy attacks. Their ability to set up night ambushes and sustain them all night varied widely.

The home defenders are credited in enemy documents and by enemy soldiers who rally to the GVN with a credible ability to defend their positions when attacked. The enemy usually prefers to go around a PF outpost rather than overrun it.

RF performance also varies widely. In some areas the RF are rated better than ARVN. They have been known to charge entrenched NVA positions. In other areas, however, their performance is abysmal. In one district with a large VC force population, one RF unit conducted 1,032 "operations" and made only nine contacts. In Hau Nghia RF units conduct "search and avoid" operations in areas where U.S. units always find contact. In Vinh Binh the RF rarely leave their static defense positions. In most provinces of South Vietnam, e.g., Kien Hoa, An Xuyen, Hau Nghia, Binh Duong, it is rare for an RF unit, or any ground force, to operate between 11 p.m. and 4 in the morning. Thus, while some units perform well, many do not.

The GVN views the major role of the PSDF as political: membership, even though it is obligatory for certain age groups, is believed to identify the peasant with the GVN and symbolize a "commitment." "If the VC attack the PSDF, they attack the people."

Americans described the military role of the PSDF as limited: to create a "zone of uncertainty" around the hamlet, reducing the odds

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that an enemy can enter it without touching off an armed reaction. They fulfill this role by establishing night time patrols and listening posts and, in the event of a contact, shooting a few times and withdrawing, leaving exploitation of the contact to the better armed PF.

However, in 1970, in accordance with President Thieu's plan to upgrade his para-military forces, special PSDF "interteams" or "hard-core" PSDF units will be created. They will be full-time force paid out of resources raised by the village chief and used by the district chief in a manner similar to PF platoons.

Most Americans were extremely cautious in assessing the value of the PSDF to date. The Province Senior Advisor in Pleiku expressed enthusiasm for the program, and a Marine CAP officer in Quang Tin said the PSDF in his area were almost as good as PFs. In Chau Doc the PSDF were rated highly. On the other hand, the PSA in Hau Nghia said the program was achieving disappointing results; the PSA in Binh Dinh said that the PSDF have a long way to go; the CORDS Deputy in II Corps said that the PSDF program was at a cross-roads -- they receive only superficial training, and their significance remains to be demonstrated.

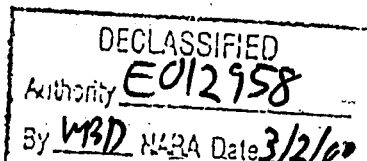
A frequently mentioned problem was the risk that PSDF units were infiltrated by the VC. For example, in Vinh Long and Vinh Binh Provinces, the recent overrunnings of two PSDF outposts in each Province were described by U.S. advisors as inside jobs. The VC seemed to be targeting PSDF units, probably in order to destroy the credibility of the concept in the minds of the villagers.

Factors in Improved Security

Summary. Identifiable causes for improved territorial security and our summary findings on the extent to which they can be reproduced are:

-- increases of 50% to 75% in the last two years in the total number of RF and PF, in addition to the increases in the number of PSDF and armed PSDF. Force increases of this order will not be achievable in the future.

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-- improved leadership and performance of RF and PF units fostered by the skills and leadership training imparted by U.S. advisors as a result of combined operations with U.S. units, and confidence gained from successful maintenance of security even in the face of a declining threat. The key element in most cases of improved leadership and unit performance was the American role. Extensive American involvement will continue to be required both in advisory and combined capacity if territorial security leadership and performance are to continue to improve. The enemy threat to "untested" territorial forces will also make further leadership and performance gains more difficult to achieve.

-- better logistics support provided primarily through U.S. supply channels. The Vietnamese logistics system is not capable of supporting its own forces. A substantial continued U.S. role is required if territorial forces are to receive adequate logistics support.

-- better equipment, particularly the M-16,

-- better combat support provided, with few exceptions (artillery being the notable one), by U.S. forces. Again, substantial U.S. helicopters, artillery, tactical air, and direct combat support will be required if territorial security advances are to continue.

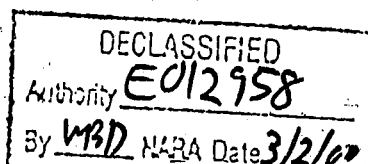
-- the application of a successful concept of pacification security.

Details

Increased Territorial Forces. The increased number of territorial forces was evident throughout the country. In many areas we visited, for example Hau Nghia, the number of RF companies had doubled in the last 18 months. In 1969, 400 additional PF platoons were added in the Delta alone. In III Corps there are now 92,700 ARVN forces or five Division equivalents. This compares with 90,000 RF and PF or 18 infantry Division equivalents of rifle units.

It is unlikely that territorial forces can again be expanded as they were over the last 18 months. Many of the additional forces came from hamlets uncovered by pacification gains that have now reached the point where they are more difficult to achieve, and the unpacified areas are more sparsely populated than those areas pacified in 1968-69.

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However, some further recruitment may be possible. We were told that in Phong Dinh province, "ARVN gets nothing but PF authorizations are filled overnight." In Cai Lay District of Dinh Tuong, the District Chief said PF recruiting presented "no problems" and there were only "slight difficulties" recruiting RF. Similarly in Binh Duong, Pleiku, Chau Doc, and Binh Dinh advisors reported that additional RF and PF could be recruited. Chau Doc, which has an acute requirement for more RF to establish outposts to meet NVA units moving into the Delta from Cambodia, had the lowest new RF/PF authorization in the Delta in 1969 even though manpower is available. The Pleiku PSA said the province could recruit double the seven additional PF platoons authorized in 1970.

In other areas additional recruits for RF and PF units are unavailable. In sparsely populated Binh Long the recruiting base was exhausted. In Vinh Binh where the VC control a larger proportion of the population than anywhere else in South Vietnam, the GVN has difficulty even keeping its existing RF/PF units up to strength.

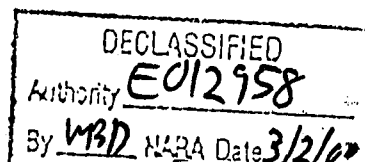
Leadership. Improved leadership appeared to be another cause for gains in territorial security. We were told repeatedly that the Vietnamese soldier is a "good fighter" and "has guts," if he is properly led. When we asked what distinguishes a good unit from a poor one the answer was inevitably "leadership." For example, in Vinh Binh, of the 7 RF companies, 2 were rated "fairly good," 3 "satisfactory," 2 "unsatisfactory." The variation was attributed to "different commanders."

Americans have had a favorable impact on the leadership:

-- District Advisors and Mobile Advisory Training Teams (MAT teams) have played an important role in upgrading territorial forces, particularly as a result of their influence on unit and sub-sector commanders.

-- Combined or joint U.S. - Vietnamese unit operations have given Vietnamese units a taste of aggressive combat, backed by the best combat support, as well as an opportunity to learn tactical and individual combat skills.

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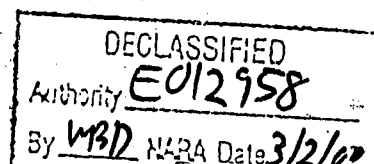
There are 353 U.S. five-man MAT teams currently attached to Vietnamese RF and PF units. In 1970 another 145 will be added. In principle MAT teams spend 60 days with RF companies and 30 days with PF platoons imparting weapons, tactical and leadership skills. In practice the time spent varies with the quality of the Vietnamese unit and the enemy situation.

One MAT team member described his task as teaching his Vietnamese counterpart to read maps and to use smoke flares. Others candidly admitted that their counterparts had the requisite tactical skills. They described their contribution in terms of the supplies they could obtain both by using U.S. channels to prod the Vietnamese system and from U.S. sources. One Vietnamese District Chief valued his American advisors because they have access to air, artillery and medical evacuation support and, secondarily to higher level intelligence information; he downgraded their importance in teaching combat skills.

Combined U.S. - Vietnamese operations have also contributed to leadership and unit performance improvements. U.S. 1st Division in Tri Tam District of Binh Duong allocates three platoons every day to work with RF and PF units. U.S. Air Cavalry units in Binh Long have conducted airmobile operations with RF companies along the Cambodian border. The U.S. 25th Division operates with RF companies in Hau Nghia. The Americal Division uses RF and PF as infantry for armored operations in Quang Tin. Marine squads are combined with PF platoons throughout I Corps.

It seems undisputable that these operations have contributed greatly to improved RF/PF performance. RF/PF operating with U.S. units know they can obtain air and medical evacuation support. These joint operations seem to impart confidence which probably results from successful contact with the enemy.

We frequently inquired about the residual benefits that Vietnamese units retain from joint operations. One advisor commenting on the contribution of the 173rd Brigade in Binh Dinh Province of RF/PF performance, said "it sticks -- very definitely." The degree to which these benefits are retained is in large part determined by the logistics and combat support Vietnamese units receive when they operate alone.

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Logistics Support. Increased logistics support, provided primarily by the U.S. has contributed to gains in territorial force performance.

We obtained mixed reports on the performance of the Vietnamese logistics system. One District Chief said general support is fine. An American advisor in Binh Dinh said the system works with a little prodding by American advisors. Another said "We did have supply problems but it is getting better." In several instances we were told that barrier materials for Vietnamese outposts had to be obtained from American sources.

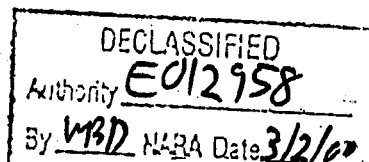
Equipment. As one advisor put it, "Somebody did a good thing when they issued the M-16's." A Dinh Tuong advisor said M-16's provide a "major boost" to RF/PF performance.

RF/PF soldiers are proud of the M-16 and take care of it. One M-16 carried by a PF soldier we approached at random in a dusty highland village looked as if it had just come off the production line. It was four months old. Similarly we were told that equipment and barrier materials supplied by the Americans are used efficiently.

Although RF and PF units were generally reasonably well supplied, some critical equipment needs were not being met. Almost everywhere we heard an appeal for PRC 25 radios. In Pleiku some PF platoons had no radios. Thus they were incapable of calling in artillery or air support. In Chau Doc starlight scopes and ground radars were sought to counter NVA infiltration. In I Corps we were told that PF units skillfully employed starlight scopes to locate the enemy.

Combat Support. Combat support is another area of recent improvements that have contributed to gains in territorial security. We were impressed that most RF/PF units could obtain accurate artillery support from U.S. or Vietnamese sources. One American advisor said Vietnamese artillery support was more accurate and reliable than that provided by Americans. On the other hand, some expressed concern that the departure of U.S. units would deny artillery support to RF/PF units. ARVN artillery units are often tied down fulfilling territorial security requirements. There may be a requirement to establish RF/PF artillery units.

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Whereas AC-47 (spooky) gunship support seemed to be available to most RF/PF units, helicopter gunships were only infrequently available. This is important. We were told of one PSDF platoon that was attacked by VC/NVA unit. Helicopter gunship support was available within ten minutes during which the unit held. The PSDF unit then aggressively pursued the enemy unit.

"Dust-offs" or medical evacuation helicopters appeared to be as important an item of combat support as anything else. American advisors were valued for this alone, as their presence almost guaranteed that wounded Vietnamese would be evacuated. We were told that one of the reasons ARVN airborne units perform so well is that their dead are immediately taken by helicopter and properly buried.

In sum, we were impressed that substantial combat support was provided to Vietnamese territorial forces. This represents a major improvement over the situation in 1967 and clearly has helped to raise RF/PF performance. Most of this support is provided by American units. As U.S. units withdraw this support may be jeopardized. Moreover, improved helicopter gunship and medical evacuation support could be provided even now.

Concept of Pacification

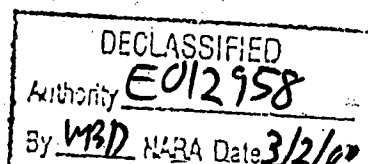
In the past various concepts of pacification have been applied in Vietnam. These concepts, for example, the strategic hamlet and revolutionary development cadre concepts, have failed. We think that the following aspects of the current pacification concept and its application have contributed to its success:

-- the low enemy threat in late 1968 at the time the current pacification effort was launched, which enabled the GVN to try the concept under favorable circumstances.

-- the reliance on the locally recruited and nationally paid Popular Forces as the key territorial security force.

-- a clearer understanding on the part of U.S. advisors of the benefits to the GVN which accrue as a result of pacification gains.

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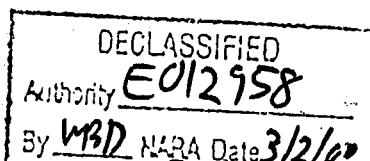


We found a high awareness among Americans of the fact that GVN control gains can greatly weaken the enemy's capability to mount offensive or main force attacks. General Abrams' view is that "if the GVN can achieve solid control gains as it has in Thua Thien, over a wide enough area, then the enemy must recognize he cannot succeed, or he must change his tactics." U.S. advisors also recognized the role friendly main forces play in upgrading the quality of and providing combat support for territorial forces.

The awareness of Vietnamese officials of the concept of pacification was less distinctive than on the U.S. side. Local officials demonstrated an appreciation for the complementary roles of territorial and main forces and national level authorities, particularly President Thieu, have backed the pacification program. On the other hand, we encountered evidence that some officials, particularly at the national level, understood the concept better than the reasons for its success. For example the suggestion that withdrawn U.S. forces can be replaced by upgraded RF and PF overlooks the fundamental reason for RF/PF success -- they defend their home areas. The formation of the PSDF "interteams" and the belief that these unpaid volunteer units can carry a much greater defense burden when almost every report on PSDF effectiveness is unfavorable, assumes that villagers are willing to make substantial voluntary sacrifices for the GVN. This assumption has not held in the past. In short, whether the GVN has a firm enough grasp on the fundamental reasons for pacification success to permit them to modify the present concept in the face of U.S. troop withdrawals and an increasing enemy effort to counter pacification is open to question.

-- the use of the HES system as a pacification management tool. HES allows GVN officials to check the performance of their subordinates. For example, some Province Chiefs require their District Chiefs to explain why each hamlet received the ratings given. National level control is also exercised using HES. Finally, U.S. advisors at all levels use HES as a lever to achieve GVN reforms. Whereas in 1967 HES was a U.S. sponsored information system used by the U.S. alone, in 1969 HES is the operational language of pacification spoken by Americans and Vietnamese alike.

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-- the role played by U.S. advisors in pinpointing ineffective district and province chiefs and obtaining their release. U.S. advisors maintain a list of ineffective GVN officials and through informal communications with the GVN have been able to secure the relief of a significant number of these officials.

Government Effectiveness

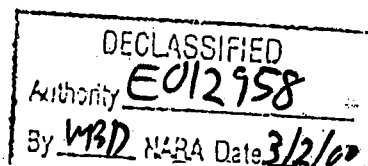
The GVN conducts a wide range of activities in the rural areas besides providing security. We did not investigate these activities to any depth, with the exception of the Phoenix program. In the non-intelligence areas we found:

-- the Village Self Development (VSD) program was criticized by some advisors and farmers on the grounds that most of the million piasters provided to each village was given to the rich farmers. The economic feasibility of many VSD projects is doubtful; for example, cooperative pig raising usually meant each farmer took his pig and raised it at home or ate it.

-- the Vietnam Information Service was roundly criticized as being "too mechanistic, not concerned with substance," and ineffective in explaining government programs and viewpoints. VIS personnel only infrequently get out among the people. If a ceasefire were agreed to or the communists were permitted to engage in political activities, the GVN would be incapable of countering the enemy's propaganda effort.

-- while the proportion of hamlet and village official positions filled has risen considerably in the last 18 months, for example, 50-60% to 90% in Hau Nghia, the quality of the officials is suspect. One Province Chief said his village chiefs preferred to sit in their offices and handle papers. Several advisors said village officials had a poor attitude toward the population. Although we asked on several occasions for evidence on village and hamlet officials and their performance, we could find none. We were repeatedly told that such-and-such percent had been to Vung Tau for training, but we were unable to find out how this training affected their performance.

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-- police effectiveness is another area that may be cause for concern. One survey of four villages in Binh Duong found that one was satisfied with police performance, two were dissatisfied, and one was indifferent. It seems to be an important limitation on the police program that village policemen are rarely indigenous to the village to which they are assigned. We were also disturbed by one police advisor's comment that: "The Advisory job here is no different than helping any police department, except they don't think in terms of our concepts." This sort of attitude does not suggest a constructive advisory role in an environment that is in almost every respect radically different from the U.S. We doubt whether, given their current performance, attitudes and training, the insertion of police in recently pacified villages will solve many problems, and they may well create additional problems.

-- village and hamlet elections will be held in 1970 for those officials elected in 1967. These elections offer an opportunity for the type of political analysis on the villages of Vietnam which has not heretofore been produced.

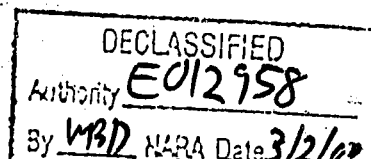
The Phoenix Program

Accomplishments to Date. The Phoenix Program was established to facilitate the identification and "neutralization" of the VC infrastructure through systematic pooling of intelligence information and coordinated anti-VCI operations. Its basic elements are the Intelligence Operations Coordination Centers at Province and District levels (PIOCCs and DIOCCs).*

DIOCCs include representation from all organizations that come into possession of information on the infrastructure or that have the capability to arrest, capture or kill them, RF, PF, PSDF National Police, National Police Field Forces, Provincial Reconnaissance units, etc.

* In some Provinces, such as Dinh Tuong, such centers have been organized at village level (VIOCCs), but in principle the purpose of the VIOCC is the exchange and maintenance of information; they do not carry out operations against the VCI.

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The DIOCCs have two main functions. First, they are to identify VCI in the district and to collect information and maintain dossiers on those VCI that have been identified. They also estimate additional district VCI positions that exist but for whom individuals have not been identified. In principle, the dossiers are to be complete enough to justify arrest and conviction of the individual. The first function is then an intelligence function.

Second, the DIOCCs, are to plan and carry out operations to neutralize the VCI. If the VCI is well protected, an elaborate military plan may be required. However, the DIOCC itself does not have operational control over forces; it depends on the cooperation of the member agencies.

In a few areas, a Province Senior Advisor or American DIOCC advisor would claim that a given DIOCC was functioning effectively and was the best in the province. However, this usually meant that the Vietnamese officials were motivated, worked well together, and were trying to improve their performance, not that the overall performance of the DIOCC was particularly effective.

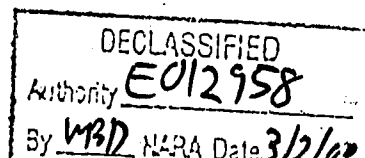
By most evidence, the Phoenix program is not successful.

-- In general, there is a distinct lack of high level backing and coordination among DIOCC members and considerable evidence of jealousy. The covert agencies don't like to share their information, and there is friction between civilian and military representatives. Moreover, there is a strong tendency for the police to dominate. The Tam Ky DIOCC advisor, who seemed to have a fully functioning organization, stated simply, "the bureaucratic problems are insurmountable."

-- The collection of information and the maintenance of dossiers are frequently sloppy, inadequate to serve as a basis for police or court action.

-- There was almost no evidence of specific targeting. Very few Phoenix operations go to a specific location to capture specific VCI. Most operations are dragnets and obtain sparse results.

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-- Critics argue that the Phoenix program may serve as a cover for political arrests, assassinations, and retributions (such abuse is clearly possible, though we did not investigate it). However, the GVN has not obtained the support of the people for the Phoenix program. In Hau Nghia we were told villagers view Phoenix as another threat. One U.S. Phoenix advisor reported that the program was regarded as a police-type program that is disliked and distrusted.

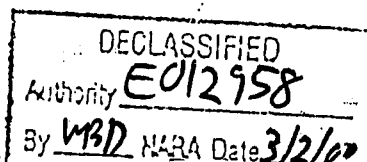
-- There are also indications of accommodation. Many advisors noted that DIOCC officials are reluctant to arrest important VCI because of fear of retribution or out of belief that they may have to work with the VCI politically at a later time.

-- Even where DIOCC were claimed to be effective, the great majority of the neutralizations were not attributable to DIOCC planned and coordinated operations. Countrywide, we judged that 85% of the neutralizations were attributable to the Chieu Hoi program, to military operations, or to the actions of individual agencies, such as the PRU, operating on their own. A high proportion of those VCI neutralized are either killed, captured or rally to U.S. forces.

-- When a village is brought under government control, and even when it is contested, the VCI, certainly the key officials, can no longer stay in the village. They must move to remote areas or to other provinces to avoid capture and reenter the village only occasionally and clandestinely. Thus they are beyond the practical range of local authorities.

Against this evidence it can be argued that:

-- The existence of DIOCCs and VIOCCs may serve as a deterrent to VC activities in a hamlet, i.e., it may be one of the reasons the VCI are forced to leave. For example, Lia Thieu DIOCC operations were responsible for a high proportion of VCI neutralization when the VCI resided in their home areas. Now pacification has progressed so that VCI are beyond the reach of small units -- U.S. and ARVN units are responsible for most neutralizations.

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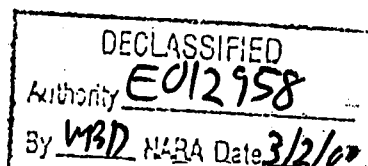
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-- The failure to convict many VCI for whom dossiers are available is often due to a faulty and corrupt judicial system not to an inept DIOCC.

-- There are successes. In Lai Thieu -- the best DIOCC in III Corps -- a recent DIOCC flyer with a description and photograph of the District People's Revolutionary Party Secretary caused a villager to report his presence to the 5th ARVN Division which captured him.

-- The fact that the VCI remains intact is in part an indictment of Phoenix but it is also a tribute to the resiliency of the VCI.

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Popular Support

A key to the strength and durability of GVN control is the extent of popular support for the GVN. The VSSG study showed, for example, that over the first half of the 1967-69 period the Viet Cong were able to control more of the rural population than they could provide security for, but by 1969 the enemy was no longer able to do this. On the basis of scattered evidence, the VSSG study concluded that this change was attributable to the people's disenchantment with the VC as a result of their heavy handed behavior during the offensives of 1968, for example in Hue.

On our trip we found that the Viet Cong have suffered a substantial decline in popularity to the point that neither they nor the GVN seem to have a decided advantage with regard to the population at large. But from area to area the extent of popular support varies widely and appeared to depend on the following:

-- Extent of Historical Influence: In certain areas of Vietnam, there are Viet Cong societies whose roots date back to the 1930's. Vinh Binh, Hau Nghia, areas of Binh Duong (Tri Tam or VC Diau Tang District),¹ Binh Dinh, and Southern I Corps (Quang Nam, Quang Tin, Quang Ngai) fall in this category. It is extremely difficult for the GVN to make inroads into these areas, although if most of the other factors mentioned below run in the GVN's favor, there is a chance² that the endemic societal opposition to the GVN can be overcome.

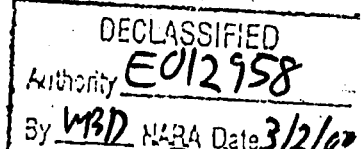
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At Tab A are two maps of a hamlet in Tri Tam District of Binh Duong, one map of the hamlet before it was "consolidated" into a more easily controlled portion of its former area and one afterwards. On both maps, the homes of families with members with the Viet Cong are shaded. This gives one a visual appreciation of what is meant by a VC society as it developed in the rubber plantation areas of Tri Tam from the 1930's when the communists began to proselytize the plantation workers. (The white blocks include both GVN sympathizers and neutral families.)

2

The GVN counterpart to these VC societies are the Northern and Southern Vietnamese Catholic communities interspersed throughout South Vietnam. The Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects are more naturally hostile to the VC than the GVN insuring that areas such as Chau Doc, Sa Dec, and An Giang in the Delta and Tay Ninh in III Corps are usually in the GVN camp. Illustrative of this fact is that in the summer of 1969 a NVA/VC battalion got misrouted into An Giang province. The population was in an uproar, attacking the battalion and calling in GVN support. Within less than 24 hours the enemy unit was hit so hard that it

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-- Government Attitudes: The people of Vietnam judge the attractiveness of the GVN or VC governments mainly on the basis of what each does against their interest. Col. Shanb, the impressive new Province Chief of Hau Nghia assessed peasant preferences as being: "First, they want the VC not to bother them. Second, they want to be free from petty government (GVN) harassment."

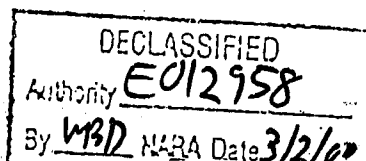
The major shortcoming of the GVN continues to be the attitude of its officials, police, and soldiers toward the population. The practical implication of a poor official attitude is that the villager is unable to obtain a sympathetic hearing or remedy for grievances against the government.

According to Col. Shanb, "the problem of poor government performance is not a question of skills or equipment but of attitudes." One farmer in Dinh Tuong province told us "the GVN still doesn't know how to communicate with the peasants, whereas the VC do." We got a similar response in Hau Nghia. ARVN behavior was criticized in Dinh Tuong, and Binh Duong, and almost everywhere the RF and PF were judged better behaved than ARVN. A recent survey of all village chiefs at Vung Tau found that one-third complained of ARVN's behavior, which they described as "condescending" toward the population.

On the other hand, we met a significant number of district and province chiefs who had a sound appreciation of the people's problems and were intent on serving the people. The Mission's current view that only 3 of the 44 province chiefs and long 13 of the approximately 250 district chiefs should be removed because they are impediments to pacification progress is probably indicative of substantial progress in this area over two years ago.

Although we frequently asked, we detected very little significant knowledge by Americans of the performance of village chiefs and the state of village politics. For example, there is little concrete information available on the execution of the village self development projects -- e.g. who participated and who got the benefits -- or on the characteristics of the village chiefs, although it is widely believed that most are former RD cadre, PF, or RF. In Vinh Binh province we were told

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that all of the GVN village chiefs, in one district, tended to be "old-line and conservative and from the richer classes."

Despite some improvement, however, the VC probably still have the best record on favorable attitudes towards the people. The VC are considered to have closer ties with the people, and as a general rule have more higher level officials who have been promoted upwards from the ranks.

-- Government Services: It is in the area of government services that the GVN's relative performance has improved the most, although in almost every case the U.S. contribution has been decisive. Better GVN roads, miracle rice, prospering GVN markets, and irrigation pumps and electricity for lights and television have made living in GVN areas very attractive compared with VC areas, where all except the poorest farmers are heavily taxed. But this effect is not uniform. In Vinh Binh, Hau Nghia and Southern I Corps, economic conditions have not improved much, whereas over most of the Delta and in Binh Dinh remarkable gains have been made.¹ However, many farmers probably credit the U.S. or the market rather than the GVN for these gains. Therefore, the effect is probably unfavorable to the VC rather than favorable to the GVN.

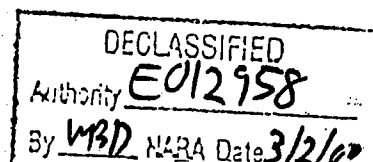
Moreover, there is one field of government services where the GVN performance lags far behind the VC's: land reform and rent controls. At random we asked ten farmers in five different provinces about the rents they paid. Three owned their own land and one farmed GVN land, paying only a nominal rent. Of the remaining six farmers, all paid rents in excess of the GVN's 25% legal limit. Example rents were 30% , 40% and 50%. In contrast, in VC controlled or VC influenced areas rents are usually 5% or less.

Thus there is still a strong incentive to have the VC around because they keep the landlords in Saigon. This incentive is probably as much social as it is economic because the root of the GVN's attitude

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Although we did not investigate the situation in the cities, we suspect that the GVN's advantage is very great, considering the U.S. AID-supported prosperity they presently enjoy. The present VC program has little to offer the city dweller.

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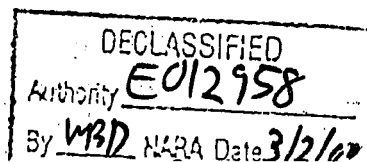
problem noted above lies in the elitist attitudes of the GVN-landlord alliance which formerly ruled the countryside. Although the army-controlled GVN represents an improvement over the past, remnants of the former alliance still have more influence on the army-run GVN than does the peasant (to wit the assembly-blocked and diluted land reform bill).

Corruption is another major GVN problem. We found that a sub-district official in Binh Dinh, with whom we spoke at length, paid 30,000 piaster for his job -- about a year's salary which he has to make up somehow. Popular Force positions are also "sold" by GVN officials. The III Corps commander, many of his province chiefs, and local ARVN commanders are known to be profiting from the lumber trade northwest of Saigon for which ARVN troops provide security. Corruption is another area Americans seem to know little about, although what evidence there is suggests that the problem is quite serious.

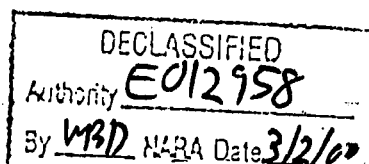
One indicator of popular attitudes is the amount of intelligence each side gets from the population. In general, the people provide intelligence to the side that is providing them with security, whether it be the VC or the GVN, or one in the daytime and the other at night. This was not the general case in the past because the GVN got less intelligence from the population than the VC did. In large measure, perhaps, this improvement is due to the fact that the GVN appears to have the upper hand for the moment, meaning that provision of intelligence and thereby popular support, to the extent they are related, follow rather than lead control.

But in the VC society areas and the special sect areas mentioned earlier this tendency does not hold as the VC and GVN respectively get intelligence from the people. The GVN also appears to get substantial intelligence from the people in the urban areas and areas such as Lai Thieu District of Binh Duong province, which because they border on Saigon, enjoy urban prosperity. We take this evidence to mean that except in the special cases singled out, popular support for one side or the other is not now playing a major role and the GVN and VC stand about even with regard to public attitudes.

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This does not mean, however, that the fact that the GVN has been able to pull even in the last two years -- largely because the VC overplayed their hand in 1968 -- is the cause for great satisfaction. While it probably means that the chances for GVN survival have improved, the problem of corruption, the return of the landlords, and poor GVN/ARVN attitudes as well as Saigon's general ignorance of conditions in the countryside do not justify complacency. This general ignorance, together with the forced draft pace of Vietnamization and the resulting pressures in Washington and Saigon to be optimistic, suggest that we may not become aware that these problems are out of hand until a substantial amount of damage has been done.

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IV. PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

Our summary judgment is that the odds are at best about even that the GVN will survive and that GVN control in the countryside will be maintained or improved during the period of American troop withdrawals. It is far more likely that the GVN will lose control than it is that they will significantly increase it. If conditions do permit the continued expansion of GVN control, it will be at a much slower rate than in the past.

These judgments are based on our estimate of the combined effects of the following factors:

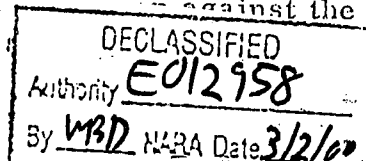
- enemy capabilities and strategy,
- the withdrawal of American troops,
- the upgrading of GVN local security forces,
- prospects for the availability of adequate resources to support the war,
- prospects that the GVN will capitalize on its opportunities to improve popular support, and
- complacency.

The Enemy's Capabilities to Execute Various Strategies

There is no sign that the enemy has given up. In fact he appears to have embarked on a course of action, the direction of which is unknown to the U.S. No one we spoke with claimed to understand what the enemy is up to. General Abrams said he thought he knew until two months ago. Now he is "puzzled." He said, "This is an admission against interest; I should know what they are doing and what to do about it." The General noted that the enemy did seem intent on preserving "the guts" of his operation -- "his guerrillas and infrastructure."

General Abrams suggested that the enemy is "keeping his options open," and that whatever his course of action, "the enemy will take some time coming along." No one we talked to had a better grasp of the war than General Abrams and no one has more information.

From the scattered evidence we were able to collect, we discern several important trends. These are -- against the backdrop of the enemy's current situation, discuss



-- We saw that the enemy's capability has been greatly curtailed over the past two years. His control apparatus, a primary determinant of how capable he is of mounting an offensive in any given area or countrywide, has been seriously damaged. Heavy net losses, since 1967, of between 25% and 50% from his guerrilla forces and his VC companies, along with extensions of GVN control apparatus in the form of RF and PF deployments, have forced the VCI to withdraw into the hills, thereby rendering them incapable of performing vital recruiting, supply, intelligence, and combat support functions for NVA and VC main forces.

-- On the other hand the enemy's will to fight seems undiminished. He appears to be carefully rebuilding his capability in critical areas of the country. In the Delta, Southern I Corps, Binh Dinh and on the important routes to Saigon he is making a determined effort to protect and strengthen his base areas and critical LOCs and reassert his influence in the populated areas he has traditionally controlled.^{1/} There are some signs that, thwarted in his efforts to maintain his corridors to Saigon through Tay Ninh and Binh Duong, he may be opening new corridors to the east through Long Khanh, Binh Tuy, and Phuoc Tuy. There is a discernible theme of experimentation in the enemy's activities. He appears to be testing to determine his strengths and the GVN's weaknesses.

However, evidence on the state of the enemy's forces and his activities in selected areas of the country does suggest trends in the enemy's behavior which should hold for the next six months to a year. These trends can best be viewed on the basis of the degree to which they are consistent with the following four strategy alternatives:

- a general offensive strategy,
- a high point strategy executed primarily by main forces against key cities and friendly forces,
- a protracted war strategy with infrequent high points targeted on the pacification effort and ARVN, with occasional attacks by fire and infrequent ground probes at cities and towns designed to force ARVN to fall back, thereby uncovering tender GVN territorial forces in the enemy's key areas.

^{1/} For example, Quang Nam, Quang Tin, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Hau Nghia, North Binh Duong, Dinh Tuong, Kien Hoa, and Vinh Binh.

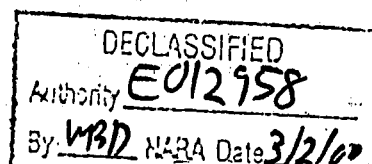
-- a political strategy of accommodation, coalition, or ceasefire unleashing the communist fox in the barnyard of GVN politics.

-- A general offensive strategy is not compatible with either the enemy's intentions or his capabilities. As described in COSVN 9, the enemy seems intent on a strategy which emphasizes long-term victory rather than short-term gains. His stated intentions appear to be compatible with his seriously diminished capability, which is not adequate to sustain a general offensive. The enemy controls at most about 8% of the population and influences another 10% compared with 35% controlled and another 12% influenced two years ago. The forces which bore the brunt of the 1968 offensive - his guerrillas and VC local and main forces -- are the weakest in his force structure. Moreover available indicators show no signs of enemy mobilization along the lines such indicators showed in late 1967, nor is the rate of infiltration sufficient for a general offensive. The enemy's current intense logistics effort probably reflects his recognition that he can no longer rely on indigenous support for combat operations as he could in the past, as well as his intention to keep his options open with regard to future actions.

Finally, the chances of enemy success with a general offensive strategy are very slim as long as U.S. forces are present with strength adequate not only to stiffen the GVN response but to substitute for it if that becomes necessary. It is therefore improbable that the enemy will mount a general offensive in 1970.

-- A high-point strategy executed by fire and ground probes against key cities and towns and U.S. forces is also unlikely. While economy of force tactics such as attacks by fire could be employed, the enemy must know that these alone would not be of sufficient intensity to deter the GVN from moving further out in the countryside. A high-point strategy of ground assaults could be executed, but as long as U.S. troops are present in substantial force and until VC forces and the VC control apparatus are substantially strengthened, this strategy would be very costly in terms of NVA troops.

On the other hand, the enemy might reason that the high U.S. casualties inflicted by ground attacks would accelerate U.S.

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troop withdrawals or benefit him politically in the U.S. Against this the enemy would have to weigh the risk of U.S. retaliation or a slowing in the rate of troop withdrawals. The enemy may also be sensitive to his declining political appeal with the population - a decline dating from the Tet Offensive - a situation unlikely to be improved by attacks on population centers.

Finally this strategy would forego one of the enemy's most important advantages, his unity and resolve to win compared with the GVN's tendency to bicker among itself and slack off when the pressure eases.

In short, a high point strategy would not give sufficient attention to the countryside and runs considerable risk of a counter-productive reaction in the populated areas and in Washington if executed with attacks by fire. If it were executed by ground assaults would likely be extremely costly in NVA forces.

-- A protracted war strategy with infrequent high points targeted on pacification and ARVN is a highly probable enemy strategy, being most consistent with the evidence we collected. We noted earlier the enemy's concerted effort to stiffen his guerrilla and local force companies with NVA fillers and through the downgrading of regiment and battalion-size units. In every area there was strong evidence that the enemy was targeting the GVN's territorial forces. PSDF units had been attacked and subverted, RF units attacked and ambushed, and PF units were also frequent targets of company or smaller size VC/NVA attacks.

The declining rate of gains shown by the VSSG control indicator, which moved from 54.0% in September to 59.8% in October, but leveled off at 61.3% in November and 61.6% in December, may indicate that pacification momentum is faltering. ^{1/} Part of this loss of momentum can be attributed to the termination of the pacification campaign in October. In November and December

^{1/} The recent decline in the Chieu Hoi rate may also reflect the increasing VC control strength coupled with some decline in friendly force pressure on VC areas. Over the last six months ralliers have numbered: July '69, 5,608; Aug. '69, 3,907; Sept. '69, 3,524; Oct. '69, 5,615; Nov. '69, 4,021; Dec. '69, 3,424; Jan. '70, 3,347.

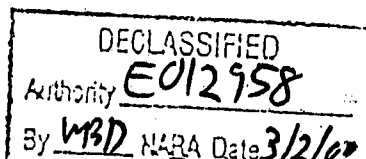
GVN officials were preparing their 1970 pacification plans. However, the VSSG security score (the proportion of the rural population subject to only slight - A-B - levels of enemy activity) also leveled out in late 1969 suggesting that increasing enemy activity contributed to this loss of GVN momentum. The VSSG security score rose steadily from 44.3 in July to 47.0% in August to 51.6% in September to 55.7% in October; however, it fell to 54.5% in November, recovering slightly to 55.2% in December.

The enemy's political campaign offers a more ambiguous insight into his course of action than the capabilities and activities of his military forces. His propaganda is featuring U.S. troop withdrawals. Through trials and executions of GVN agents, assassinations of GVN officials, attacks on effective RF and PF commanders, and troop proselytizing, he is seeking to encourage neutrality and prepare the war for his return by reminding the population and RVNAF troops of the fate of those who assist the GVN. In short, the enemy's force deployments, his activities and propaganda suggest that he is pursuing a protracted war strategy, the primary target of which is the GVN pacification program.

-- a political strategy of accommodation, coalition, or ceasefire designed to permit the VCI to operate as a political force in GVN areas would appear to have many advantages for the enemy. We observed these advantages in Binh Khe, district of Binh Dinh Province.² There are several active political parties in Binh Khe at least two of which are intent on acquiring VC members, a tactic designed to increase their survivability as well as their membership. A coalition government in Saigon is the hot political issue believed to be promoted by the communists. In addition, a Vietnamese speaking American observer resident in the District reported that "almost all of the village chiefs have made accommodations with the VC to insure their own security." The enemy's interests in a coalition government and in accommodations are easy to appreciate. But the case just cited was the only one we found where GVN officials and the GVN political situation accommodated these interests.

² This district, which contained only A, B, and C hamlets at the end of 1969, has recently had three PF platoons and one PSDF unit overrun, in one case by VC in ARVN uniforms.

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On the issues of ceasefire we found only scattered evidence. This propaganda theme appears to have declined since early 1969. The enemy's experience with the 1954 ceasefire may cause him to be hesitant about its benefits. He may be reluctant to risk uncovering his most critical indigenous asset, the VCI, to GVN scrutiny, a probable result of a ceasefire. As U.S. involvement declines the risk that the GVN might use the ceasefire as a tactic to expose the VCI will increase; therefore, the attractiveness of a ceasefire to the enemy will probably decline. On the other hand, no aspect of the enemy's current situation or performance precludes a political strategy although there is little evidence to suggest such a strategy has been selected. Therefore, such a strategy is an option the enemy might consider.

Thus, in attempting to assess the enemy's precise course of action over the next six months to a year, the following two considerations are important:

-- the enemy's determination seems unimpaired despite the many serious setbacks he has suffered over the last two years, and

-- the enemy probably considers his current strategy to be a transitional one, the primary purpose of which is to retrench but at the same time prepare himself to pursue any option as it might arise as he probes the GVN's newly established defense for their weaknesses and awaits the additional opportunities he expects will develop as a result of U.S. troop withdrawals,

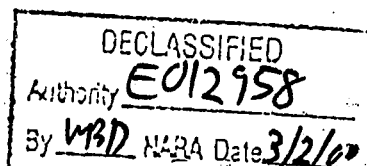
-- current enemy capabilities and activities are most consistent with a protracted war strategy, although they are not inconsistent with a political strategy.

In other words the GVN is still facing a determined, skillful and flexible enemy whose present disadvantageous position in no way indicative of his long term capability.

The Withdrawal of American Troops

American forces support the GVN in the countryside by:

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-- creating a favorable environment for GVN control by coping with the VC/NVA main force threat;

-- providing direct combat support for GVN forces in the form of air, artillery, helicopter gunships and medical evacuation support,

-- assisting GVN forces with advisory, training and logistics support.

Ground Combat Forces - In the areas we visited such as Hau Nghia, Binh Dinh, South I Corps (Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, and Quang Tin), and North Binh Duong, we believe it is unlikely that GVN forces will be able to replace U.S. forces. Therefore, if U.S. withdrawals from these provinces take place within the next 12 to 18 months, we can expect to reach the point where control gains in these areas will have to be sacrificed. In other words, the GVN cannot win the war militarily there in the near future.

In the Delta, where there are no U.S. forces, there is at least an even chance that the recently infiltrated NVA regiments will be successful in forcing one of the three ARVN Divisions, such as the 9th, to meet it. This would draw the 9th away from its pacification support and base area destruction role, leaving the ARVN 7th and 25th Divisions to handle these main force pacification tasks in the Delta. Meanwhile the enemy is also infiltrating NVA into formerly VC manned local forces. Thus the Vietnamization outcome in the Delta is in question.

The central question seems to be whether GVN forces that cannot defeat the enemy can nevertheless stabilize the situation in the countryside by coping with the enemy main forces well enough so that the enemy cannot turn back the pacification program. Given the expected capability of ARVN forces the key to such a stabilization lies in the ability of GVN territorial forces to withstand increased enemy pressures. Stabilization may also require the continued presence of U.S. main forces in a deterrent role, although we did not examine this issue. U.S. main forces deployed as a deterrent could also operate in direct support of GVN territorial forces. They could provide reaction force support for GVN territorial forces and these GVN forces could continue to benefit from combined operations.

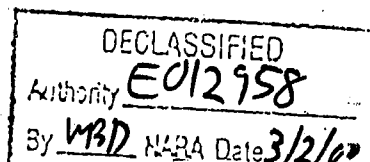
These suggestions beg the question of whether it is in the U.S. interest to pursue such a course, but it appears to us that if the war evolves as we expect it will and there is no political settlement, the U.S. will need to devise a Vietnamization strategy which contemplates the continued presence of U.S. ground combat forces in critical areas of the country for offensive missions, not just for "defending U.S. support units."

U.S. Combat Support - Although the Vietnamese have made substantial progress toward taking over many combat support functions, e.g. Vietnamese artillery and air support units make a large contribution, the U.S. still provides the bulk of the combat support available. Added combat support, e.g., helicopter gunships, would probably result in improved GVN territorial security force performance. Any lessening of U.S. combat support that is not offset by increased Vietnamese capabilities will result in GVN performance losses.

U.S. Advisory, Training, and Logistics Support - U.S. advisory support at the District level and below is a critical factor in the continued successful GVN prosecution of the control war. However, some advisory teams need to be "streamlined," and there are too many unmotivated, combat-pay-collecting advisors. Continued U.S. training and logistics support are also required. The phasing out of U.S. logistics activities in support of the control war will need to be geared to increased GVN capabilities. It appears to us that it would be foolish to skimp in these areas, considering all the other risks we cannot avoid bearing.

The "Upgrading" of GVN Local Security Forces

The pressures on the GVN resulting from U.S. troop withdrawals may lead to the abuse of pacification concepts and practices, causing a deterioration of territorial security force performance and a loss of popular support for the GVN. Recent pacification successes have been gained in part because Popular Forces, the backbone of the territorial security effort, are recruited locally, deployed in their home areas, and paid from national funds. Regional Forces are also deployed within their home district or province.

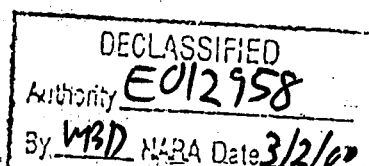


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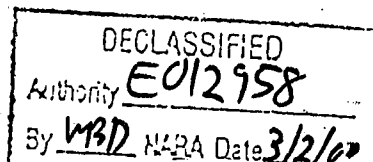
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Current GVN plans to upgrade selected RF to a main force role, to use PF to provide district security, and replace PF with "hard core" PSDF, seem to us to be too ambitious. In particular, PSDF units have demonstrated little significant combat capability and past experience with the GVN Strategic Hamlet program strongly suggests that national level demands for "voluntary" contributions to the GVN may embitter the population.

The Quang Tin Province Chief inadvertently lent credence to such suspicions when he enthusiastically pointed out that the PSDF "were cheaper than" the PF, i.e. the central government didn't have to pay them, and that responsibility for financing the new hard-core units will be the village chief's: "He can institute a market tax, or sell use of the sand dunes or something." He also denied that being a member of the PSDF was in any sense a burden on the people.

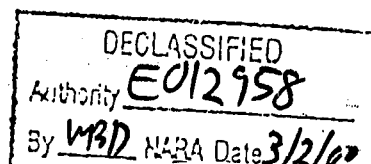
Upgrading the PF from a village and hamlet defense role may risk the loss of combat effectiveness and popular support. The Viet Cong experienced these results when they upgraded their local forces in 1968.

The fundamental weakness of the GVN which could give rise to such abuses is the limited knowledge and understanding on the part of many GVN officials of conditions in the countryside.

Prospects for the Availability of Adequate Resources to Support the War

We believe that one of the fundamental reasons GVN control is greater today than it was in 1967 is that U.S. resources have been provided to meet critical needs. Economic prosperity in the countryside, made possible by U.S. funds, has undercut support for the Viet Cong. Overall U.S. economic support permitted the more than 50% increase in the number of GVN territorial forces. Adequate pay for RF-PF forces has enhanced combat effectiveness. Improved weaponry for GVN forces, particularly the M-16, has increased the combat capability of the GVN soldier.

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Major decisions will be required if we are to continue to provide support for further gains in these areas. Decisions are imminent on RVNAF pay and other benefits, ARVN and/or RF-PF force expansions, the appropriate exchange rate and rate of inflation, rice prices and rice import levels. While further support is clearly not required in all of these areas, in the aggregate the GVN is not capable of doing more for themselves on the war front with less financial support from us.

Prospects that the GVN Will Capitalize on its Opportunities to Improve Popular Support

The Viet Cong have suffered a decline in popular support, but the GVN has not gained substantial popular support in the countryside.

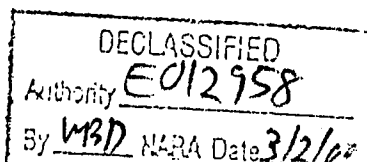
The first shortcoming of the GVN is the poor attitude of GVN officials, police, and soldiers toward the population. Communications between the GVN and its people are inadequate, and villagers are unable to obtain a sympathetic hearing or remedy for grievances against the government.

The second problem is land. Rents are often in excess of the legal limit and a land reform has not been accomplished. In land matters, the Viet Cong program is more attractive for the peasant.

The third GVN problem is corruption. GVN civilian and military positions are often "purchased" for thousands of piasters. High level GVN officials, ARVN commanders, provincial and district officials are engaged in corrupt activities.

Complacency

While we were very encouraged to find that Americans seem to understand the war better than before, there is a danger that we have become bogged down by our own successes. Many seem to actually believe that the task is 90% accomplished, as some HES statistics show.



The GVN is especially vulnerable to complacency. General Abrams warned that, "Some Province Chiefs, some Army officers, some District Chiefs, if left on their own devices, would relax in the last quarter or the last half, and that is just when the other side will turn the score around on you." General Ewell said, "The real problem is when things get quiet they want to stack arms."

Much is still undone. The GVN has yet to accomplish fundamental reforms that are vital to success. In addition, the enemy has not been defeated. As one U.S. General put it, "I fear the tremendous tenacity and determination of the enemy."

It is certain that if GVN resolve and reform are to be spurred, there is a requirement for an innovative U.S. advisory effort as well as a sober appreciation of the tasks yet to be accomplished.

